1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

the Lepchas' ethics and attitudes which go to make a culture are founded on a community of equal citizens; divorced from such a community the Lepcha culture is meaningless. To some extent the Lepchas have adapted themselves to the changed conditions, accepting the way of life and language of their neighbours. But compared with the Nepali and Plains Indians they are wasteful agriculturists and they have a relatively high standard of living; despite some legal protection—the Lepcha cannot be dispossessed of his last five acres of land—it seems as though they must disappear fairly rapidly, either through want or through absorption. In India a certain amount of intermarriage goes on between Lepchas and Nepali; the Lepcha woman is esteemed for her physical appearance and her mild and yielding character.

In the last census nearly all Lepchas are entered as Buddhists; a little over a thousand had been converted to Christianity. Despite the small numbers the Lepchas represent one of the most fruitful fields of missionary endeavour in Northern India; and the conversion of individuals to Christianity seems to have modified the converts' character far more profoundly than the earlier group conversion to Buddhism. The Christians with whom I came in contact exhibited a strong sense of individual sin (an attitude lamaism has been unable to implant) and excessive prudery, with which was coupled a tendency to snigger at excretory functions.

ii

In an endeavour to gain converts the Baptist mission went to the length of translating and printing in the artificial Lepcha script three books of the New Testament. This seems to have been a work of almost complete supererogation, for the Lepcha script, never widely known, has now completely fallen into disuse; in order to read the scriptures Lepchas have to learn a new, and otherwise completely useless, alphabet; most of them are far more familiar with Nepali.

The Lepcha alphabet was invented at the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century by King Cha-dor of Sikkim. According to Albert Grünwedel the Lepcha alphabet is derived from a form of the Tibetan U-med alphabet.[3] Some sort

[3] This resemblance is not very obvious to the lay eye; out of the 56 Lepcha characters 18 have no parallel in the U-med alphabet, and, of the 38 signs common to both, over half have very different forms.

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567 —Serving's father—and brought up as his peon. Such Lepcha slaves were either the children of slaves, orphans, or the children of very poor parents. A man would bring up such children and they in turn had to serve him all their lives. If the owner got a child on a female slave the child would be treated as his own, and, if a boy, would inherit, though a smaller portion than the legitimate sons. Slaves could only marry slaves, but otherwise were not distinguished by any special treatment; they received religious attention like ordinary people, and could not be sold or transferred. As in all other cases of emotional relationship among the Lepchas, there was no fixed or expected attitude between masters and slaves; if the master was kind, he was loved like a father. There was a fixed limit to the number of slaves one person could own.

A modification of this situation continues today. If there are children with nobody to look after them, as occasionally occurs, the head of the village, the Mandal, will take them into his household. When they are young they work for the Mandal like a servant, but when they grow up the Mandal arranges a marriage for them and they are then independent; there is at no time any coercion.

iv

177 In some respects the Lepchas are in a different state to most groups hitherto described by anthropologists. A few studies have been made of tribes who have only had contact with other tribes in a similar state of development, but far and away the greater number had already been more or less seriously influenced by Occidental culture, either through colonisation, missionaries, or traders. Sometimes this external modification is taken into account, sometimes practically ignored; in either case the extent and direction of European influence is easily calculable and understandable. The Lepchas on the other hand have not been in any way directly exposed to European colonisation or missionary influence. Except for an occasional tourist to Talung monastery, and the passage of a couple of mountaineering expeditions attempting to climb Kinchenjunga, Europeans have not entered Zongu. A few of the men had seen Europeans prior to our arrival through trading expeditions to Gangtok and Darjeeling, but practically none of the women; they considered us 'amazing,' particularly on account of the colour of our skins and the shape of our noses.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5
Nepal AK1
Sikkim AK3

Although they have not been influenced by Europeans the Lepchas have been very greatly influenced and their ways of life much modified by the contact and pressure of their more highly developed neighbours, the Sikkimese, the Nepali, and above all the Tibetans. The extent of this modification is almost incalculable, owing to the fact that there is no precise information available about these neighbouring societies. Tibet is, I suppose, the most written-about country in the world, but none of the literature that I know of is sufficiently detailed to allow comparisons between the Lepchas and any equivalent Tibetan group. Although there are many books on lamaism I have found none which describes the Lhatsun-pa subsect of the Nyingma-pa sect—the variation followed in Lingthem monastery—so that it is impossible to state definitely whether the Lepchas have ignored or considerably modified any aspect or aspects of the religion to which they have been converted. It is as though an investigator were trying to find out about Baptists and could only get information about Christianity in general, with some of the more obvious distinctions between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism noted.

With regard to the Sikkimese and non-Gurkha Nepali the situation is in some respects simpler; there is practically no information of any sort available about them. The *Gazeteer of Sikkim* published over forty years ago, contains some generalised statements about the habits of the Sikkimese; and the writings[9] and conversation of Major C. J. Morris who had studied the Gurkha soldiers under his command have given me information on certain points. Despite this slight help it is impossible in nearly every instance to state with any sort of certainty whether a given custom, belief or story is confined to the Lepchas, is shared by them with some other tribe, or has been relatively recently introduced from without. On the whole the only available source of information has been Lepcha tradition. Until other tribes in the same area have been studied (and the fact that Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet are practically closed to Europeans makes such studies in the near future problematical) precise questions of culture contact must remain unanswered.

The Lepchas are a mongoloid people, with, it would seem, slightly more pronounced Mongolian features, fairer complexions and greater stature than their present neighbours. Many of the children have carroty or auburn hair, but the hair of adults is always

[9] *Handbooks for the Indian Army: Gurkhas.* By Major C. J. Morris. Delhi 1937.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

During the rest of the year it falls intermittently, and in the full monsoon period, June to September, almost continuously. Owing to the precipitous nature of the land water does not lie, and the ground will be dry within six hours of a heavy downpour. In Zongu there are a great number of mountain streams running down from the snows to the rivers.

The temperature varies very considerably at the different heights. Only once in this century has snow fallen down by the river; that was in 1906. Above about 8,000 feet snow lies regularly every year, and there are often powderings of snow down to about 4,000 feet, the level of most of the houses; but the presence of oranges and peaches suggests that at this level snow and frost are neither severe nor continuous. Except for the warm and clammy monsoon period, when dysentery epidemics are liable to break out, the weather is generally cool on the habitation level, and there is considerable difference between day and night temperatures. Judging from the weather I did experience and the comparisons made I should say that the mean temperature varies between about 40 degrees Fahrenheit in winter to about 86 in summer. It follows that clothes are very necessary for warmth.

Both men and women wear thin knee-length drawers, and on the upper body a shirt; men's shirts are slightly shorter. Over this women also wear a sort of bodice made out of a thin material, formerly obtained from Assam through Bhutan. The original Lepcha outside dress was a thick piece of home-woven striped material, fastened over one shoulder with a brooch, belted at the waist with a sash and reaching to the knees. The colouring of this sash has a certain significance, those of lamas[1] usually being yellow and of laymen red or purple, though other colours are sometimes used. Within the last generation women have completely given up this indigenous type of dress in favour of the Tibetan costume, which consists of a coloured long-sleeved under-bodice, and a dark sleeveless overdress, reaching half-way down the calves and fastened with buttons. Women often tie up their hair with a head-cloth, generally resembling a dirty table napkin. Quite a number

[1] Lama is not a Lepcha word. The Lepchas call lamas either *yook-mun*—this means honoured Mun, that is 'honoured priest of the Lepcha Mun religion'—or more generally *cho-bu* which means 'book man' since the essential part of the lamaist education is reading, a talent not enjoyed by the layman. I have thought it better however to use the word 'lama' as it is already familiar to western readers in its meaning of priest of the Tibetan lamaist religion.

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Quite A Number
291 of men still wear the Lepcha dress, though the original Lepcha head-
[177] dress—a small sugar-loaf of woven bamboo surmounted by a feather—has been almost completely abandoned in favour of the biretta-like Tibetan hat decorated with coral beads. Hats are only worn on fairly ceremonious occasions. Lamas, and a few of the richer and older laymen, wear the outer dress of the Tibetan lama —a thick red, purple or dark-blue sleeved garment, joined from the waist to below the knees, and buttoning from the waist to the throat.

[286] Until the beginning of this century Lepchas used to weave all their own cloth, but nowadays only a couple of women bother to weave; people wear instead ready-made and fairly shoddy clothes. These bought clothes have had one rather serious effect, to my mind; children are usually dressed in the adapted cast-offs of their elders, and the poor and thin material in the cold winter
[164] renders young children even more susceptible to colds and bronchial trouble and has probably increased the infantile mortality. Very few people over the age of ten were troubled by colds and coughs—it would seem as though they acquired, if they survived, some sort of immunity—but there was hardly one child who was not, and the most frequent request which was made to me was for medicine to relieve these complaints. Three young children in Lingthem or
[75] the neighbourhood died of bronchial trouble during my stay there. Adults take reasonable precautions against chills, changing their clothes and taking a hot drink as soon as possible after a wetting; children who are not with older people often neglect to do so.

361 There would appear to be a considerable difference in humidity
184 and temperature between the portion of Zongu which faces the Teesta and that which faces the Talung river; the former is considerably warmer, as the cultivation of sugar-cane, manioc, and other subtropical plants shows, and it would appear that the rainfall is less. The inhabitants of the Teesta side are geographically nearer the main mule-road between Tibet and India; but it does not appear and is not believed that this propinquity with the outside world has modified the character or habits of these people in any way; they are considered to be essentially similar to the people of the Talung valley and there is constant intermarriage all through the district.

On the far side of the Talung valley the ground is excessively rough and precipitous and is to a great extent not amenable to cultivation. Although geographically outside Zongu the few settlements are administratively part of it, being attached to the bigger

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556 feckless or unlucky who have not the ground to use the help which is their due are given grain for their labour. Only with cardamum, which is a money-producing, and not a food-producing crop, is help paid for with money. The care of orphans, cripples, idiots [736] and other helpless people in exchange for the labour they can give cannot be considered as exploitation.

776 Although riches and prosperity are so desirable they are fraught with supernatural dangers; there is a devil called Ginoo *moong* 556 which attacks the over-prosperous; it is in a way Nemesis, and in a way the incarnation of other people's envious thoughts. The origin of Ginoo *moong* is told in the following story:

773 'Once upon a time there was a family called Ginoo, which consisted of seven brothers and one sister. The seven brothers had a 539 house in Lingthem up above the monastery; they had seven wives and seven sons and seven daughters and seven sons-in-law and seven daughters-in-law; they were so numerous that they could do all the field-work between here and Mangan in one day and would eat between them a whole goat at one meal. However these people had no oxen, no jewels, and no permanent cultivation.[8] When they went out to work two people had to stop at home to do the cooking and one to gather leaves for the fire. Their sister lived lower in the valley; she was a widow and had a single daughter, but she had sixty heads of oxen and many necklaces and jewels, so heavy that they weighed six seers. This woman was a Mun; she lived in the house, while her daughter slept in a shed.

'Now the brothers grumbled and spoke among themselves saying "We have nothing, no jewels and no cattle, and we could use them; our sister is a widow and excessively rich; if we were to kill her we should possess all her wealth." So they made a plan and they went up to her house at dead of night and cut her to pieces with their knives and crept back unobserved. When this occurred the daughter who was sleeping in the shed woke up with a start, thinking "What is the matter with my mother?" And she was frightened and ran to her mother's house. When she arrived there she found the verandah spattered with blood, and inside her mother sat trembling. The brothers had hacked her body to pieces but she was a very powerful Mun and all the pieces had joined together. The mother said to her daughter "Why have you come? Your maternal uncles have killed me. Now you are here go and gather

[177] [8] It is interesting to note the manner in which these very recent signs of wealth have been incorporated into the old story.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

cardamum is planted, but every year at the flowering time a sacrifice is performed in honour of the supernatural Elaiji-*nyou*, whom the Lepchas equate with Maknyam *moong*, the devil of death. When they first planted cardamum they did no ceremonies, but they got ill; then a Lepcha from outside Zongu learned the proper ritual from a Nepali Jhankri (these priests are somewhat similar to the Mun) and taught it to the Lepchas of Zongu. The rather elaborate ritual has two surprising features; it is only permitted for male Mun to officiate, and the chickens, one of which is given by each household, are hung by their feet while still living during the ceremony and only afterwards killed by a small boy who hits them on the head. Both of these features are unusual in Lepcha ritual; only for the sacrifices to *Thyak-dum* and in the hunting ritual, and a couple of new exorcisms divined in the last ten years are women Mun excluded; and in no other sacrifice at all that I know of are the sacrificial animals ill-treated or made uncomfortable before they are killed. It was also from this foreign source that the Lepchas learned that the presence of menstruating women would blight the plant in flower; this is a completely alien idea, for otherwise menstruating women are paid no attention to. The Lepchas have modified this notion by saying that the plant dislikes any strong smell; soap or excreta would have just the same effect; they will not accept the prevalent Hindu idea of women being essentially unclean.

The main crops of dry rice, millet and buckwheat are grown in the temporary fields. These consist of clearings made in the forest, or rather secondary growth, for one year, and then allowed to lie fallow for seven years before being cultivated again. Nowadays all suitable land is divided up into private holdings, the landmarks consisting of big trees or streams or stones set up at irregular intervals. On the whole these clearings are not isolated; three or more households have all their portions next to one another and travel round together every year. Related households do not usually have adjacent grounds; when the land was originally distributed care was taken, it would seem, that nobody should be especially favoured; and since then the hazards of death and inheritance and split families have assigned the present neighbours.

The clearing of the land is started in the early spring; the women cut down the lower growths with their sickles, while the men climb and lop the bigger trees and saplings. Until recently the trees used to be cut down if possible, but now there is a Court

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

622 [736] his house lame orphaned Satéo and an invalid childless widower from Liklyang); he has to give more feasts than anybody else, and these feasts are expected to be better than those of ordinary people. The office carries with it certain privileges; the remission of house and seed tax, and the right to free labour, or *béti*. The Mandal has the right to three days' work a year from each household, but I do not think a careful tally is kept in Lingthem; Chala Mandal is not unreasonable in his demands and has I think free workers whenever he needs them.

Chala Mandal is a rather fat, benign-looking man of 59 with a mobile and expressive face and rather sardonically amused, twinkling little eyes; he has a small wen which, he explained, was the *tamtoom* of one of his parents while he was in the womb having killed a namprek-*fo* (a bird which developed a dewlap because it stole rice from the God Komsi*thing*). Compared with the other Lepchas of his age he is rather fat and short of breath; he suffers from lumbago, and is much distressed at his failure to produce a son. He has had in all four wives but only the last one, a widow, has been fertile; she bore him two daughters but of these the elder died and the surviving child is a baby.

Except that he had rather better food and clothes than his neighbours Chala was in no way distinguished as a child, or given preferential treatment; but as he grew up his parents and elders taught him how to talk to people politely and avoid evil words. When he was about fifteen he was taken by his 'grandfather' (actually his father's elder brother) to the then reigning Maharajah, and told how to address him. For three years he worked at the Court as a sort of groom, and then the reigning Maharajah died and was succeeded by the present Maharajah's elder brother. A month after his death Chala returned home. A little later an order came from the Court that he was to accompany the Maharajah on a long voyage; but together with his father, his 'grandfather,' and an old white-haired lama from Talung monastery he went on a deputation to the Court, taking with him as a gift a ceremonial scarf and a rupee.[3] His 'grandfather' begged the Maharajah to excuse

[431] ● [177] [3] In Tibet and the neighbouring countries which have been influenced by its customs all formal occasions and gift-giving are accompanied by the present or exchange of a ceremonial scarf; this is a long piece of cloth, varying, according to the means and disposition of the giver, between butter muslin and the finest silk. In gifts from an inferior to a superior, or between equals if the giver wishes to flatter the recipient, one or more coins are given with the scarf. In the strictly graded society of Tibet there are infinite nuances in the

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

622 Chala from accompanying him abroad, explaining that the young man was to be his heir and that he, the 'grandfather,' was getting old and past his work and wanted Chala to help him. The Maharajah granted the request; he put a scarf round Chala's neck and presented him with a coat and length of cloth and gave him a certificate confirming him in the office of Mandal.

Chala Mandal is completely illiterate; he has never learned to read or write; he has, he says, to carry everything, all the accounts and the personal relationships and the long stories he knows and tells 'in his heart and belly.' He must not drink too much *chi* or his memory would go. In a very real way the Mandal has acted as 622 uncle for almost all his tenants, for, in the last twenty years, he has 584 arranged every marriage except two in the neighbourhood. He does not plan in advance; when he thinks a boy or girl ripe for marriage he looks round for a suitable partner and then makes the suggestion to the child's uncles; if the arrangement is satisfactory to both parties the lamas consult the horoscopes to see if the projected marriage will turn out well and the arrangements are proceeded with. Even today when he is growing old he still has to arrange every marriage, in spite of the long marches which the rôle of *bek-bu*, or marriage arranger, entails. Chala Mandal also regulates most of the private affairs of his villagers, scolding and helping if they are extravagant or quarrelsome, or unco-operative; he is called into consultation and consults others on any affair of moderate importance.

622 With me he pretended to be extremely diffident but was obviously 538 pleased with the respect I paid him; all the visits which we paid one another started out somewhat ceremoniously, though after a few minutes he would settle down and gossip and tell stories happily. He was an extremely good story teller with an astonishing memory; as well as the more serious mythology he would tell comic fables and anecdotes extremely well, mimicking the various voices and actions with most humorous precision; one of my most vivid memories is of him representing a rather foolish female devil consulting the oracle of her pubic hair which waved about in

[43] manner of giving and receiving scarves to indicate the social distance between the two parties.

177 This giving of a scarf and coin, either alone, or with other gifts, has been completely accepted by the Lepchas, and will be found as a constantly recurring theme in sociological payments, such as marriage, and also often in sacrifices to the supernatural.

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and they are expected to support, at any rate in part, the Dorjé Lapoon and the monastery custodian; they also have to give fixed contributions to the feasts which validate the rise in grade of the higher ecclesiastics.

The Lepchas have been converts to lamaism at least one, and probably two centuries, but they have, if I may so express it, sterilised and ignored those aspects of the alien religion which were sharply opposed to their major existing attitudes. They have as it were, swallowed lamaism whole, but excreted the irritating portions. The mythology presented no difficulties; their pantheon was always large and expanding, through the divination of new supernaturals, and further numbers of similar supernaturals were easily accepted; it was understandable that foreigners should know of large numbers of new ones, almost as worthy of worship as the older established ones. The idea of a priesthood in which the priests need training by older priests was also one they already possessed; and that priests should be designated by divination (the horoscope) or by heredity, rather than by the possession of a hereditary spirit was an easy modification of existing attitudes. So too was the idea that the future could be learned by calculation, as well as by dreams and inspiration; the Lepchas have a complete belief in horoscopes and have incorporated them into their lives. Similarly the idea that an essential part of the efficacy of ritual lies in word-for-word repetition was one they already possessed; that, instead of learning by rote, these rituals could be found through the alien art of reading, was to their mind a distinct advantage for lamaism, and the books and those that read them are respected and revered. Similarly mystic contemplation, to expel devils or acquire supernatural powers, had its parallel in the *munthen*, the mystic communion, of the Mun.

The social organisation was a more alien concept; to a certain, though not completely formulated, extent, they have equated the organisation of lamas with that of the family; for a lama to sleep with the wife of an inferior lama is likened to the incest of an elder brother sleeping with his younger brother's wife, though there are no sanctions against such acts; the Dorjé Lapoon are equated with the grandfathers who withdraw from work at the end of their lives to be supported by their sons and grandsons. Nevertheless this parallel does not hold good altogether, and, in so far as they have accepted the social organisation of lamaism the Lepchas have incorporated a new and alien element into their lives. This

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new element is however not of major importance; although religious titles are used in civil life no other distinction is made between layman and lamas; the social organisation is confined to the monastery. There is a difference in appearance between laymen and lamas; laymen wear their hair in a long plait whereas lamas have their heads shaved or at least close cropped; and though lamas often wear ordinary clothes for field work, on social occasions they always wear Tibetan, and not Lepcha dress. But lamas do not form a group within the society; the fact that a man is a lama is only one of the aspects of his personality, less important than his wealth or poverty, his industry or laziness, his relations by kin and marriage and friendship with other people. Only in their death are lamas given distinguishing treatment; they are usually cremated and never buried, whereas laymen are usually buried and never cremated; both laymen and lamas may, if the horoscope indicates it, be thrown into the river.

As a generalisation it may be said that the Lepchas have accepted the ritual, the validating mythology, and the organisation of lamaism; what they have completely refused to accept is the ethic. Like the other 'higher religions' lamaism is individualist; it holds that a person's chief concern should be with his own spiritual welfare. This, the key-concept of lamaism, was and is an alien attitude to the Lepchas. As has already been said, the Lepcha attitude to disapproved-of acts is social, and not individual; it is the society, and not the evil-doer, which bears the brunt of wicked acts. The Lepchas admit feelings of shame—feelings so strong that they can lead to suicide—following exteriorised social disapproval; they do not admit guilt-feelings. The more pious lamas and some laymen accept intellectually the idea of reincarnation, but they do not accept emotionally the idea of reincarnation being the result of personal acts. The form of reincarnation is discovered from horoscopes, and those depend on the time of birth or death, that is to say on chance, and not on individual behaviour. Sin is practically equated with the killing of animals; this is felt to be a dangerous act and is thoroughly congruent with the Lepchas' inhibition of aggression in other spheres of life. But the idea of asceticism, for example, being meritorious is so alien to the Lepchas, that even pious lamas have confided their private belief that the *gé-long* (as the monks who have taken their vows of asceticism are called) get their satisfactions on the sly.

I should like to suggest that this selective conversion to a new

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religion, with the rejection of those elements which are alien to the major cultural attitudes, is probable when the converted culture is fully integrated; I think parallels might be found in the conversion to Hinduism of the Nepali, and some of the native Christian and Mahomedan sects in Africa, and, possibly, among the American negroes. When the society is more or less disrupted and the convert feels himself to be alone in an alien world, individual conversion is likely to be much more complete; the Christian Lepchas with whom I came in contact in India and Gangtok had accepted the individualised Christian ethic, with its sense of sin, completely; their whole character-formation and major attitudes appeared to be modified by this conversion; and I very much regret that I was unable to study this character alteration in any detail. I should like to suggest the axiom that *Fully integrated cultures will only accept in an imported complex those elements which are congruent to the existing major attitudes, or which are felt to fill a want; those elements which are violently opposed to existing attitudes will either be excluded or so modified as to bring them into congruence with existing attitudes.* If this axiom is correct it would appear that we can learn from the observation of primitive societies much about the probable results of imposing violent social changes on simple or more complex societies.

iii

The vocation to become a lama is determined by the horoscope which is cast on the third day after birth. All the children of lamas should themselves become lamas, but in practice usually only the eldest son follows the whole career; the younger ones receive sufficient preliminary instruction to enable them to read one or two sacred manuals. The children of laymen are also occasionally predestined to become lamas, usually because they are reincarnations of dead lamas; should a child so predestined not follow his vocation as a lama he will become a half-wit. It occasionally happens that people who are not predestined to become lamas wish to study; they may do so, but 'their destiny will overcome them'.

If it is seen that the infant is going to become a lama he is presented with a yellow sash, and from a very early age his father will bring him to monastery ceremonies to allow him to get accustomed to the special atmosphere. Between the ages of ten and fifteen a teacher is chosen for the child. The choice of a teacher is supposed to be determined by his knowledge exclusively; under

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114 travel in the interior of the country. As an ethnologist I bitterly regretted this decision: but as a friend of the country I fully sympathised with His Highness's orders. If the policy of excluding strangers from Nepal is ever changed (which seems unlikely), I hope that I may be one of the first to benefit from it: but for the present no one who has seen the disastrous results of the contact of Western civilisation with some of the more primitive peoples of India can doubt the wisdom of Nepal's rulers.

In the meantime I was forced to consider other alternatives. It had always been my intention eventually to spend some time among the people of the Tibetan border. There are many Nepalese settlers in Sikkim, and I hoped, after seeing the people in their own country, to find out how they adjusted their lives when they came in contact with another culture. Also, there were the Lepchas, a shy and retiring people, said to be rapidly dying out, who claim to be the original inhabitants of the country. While I was still in Nepal I discussed plans with the British Minister, Colonel Bailey (some of whose earlier wanderings resulted in the first discovery of the blue poppy, *Meconopsis Baileyii*, which now thrives even in Hyde Park). He had been for many years Political Officer in Sikkim and knew the country intimately. It was from him that I first heard of the Talung Valley. Although he had not himself visited it he told me that it was the one purely Lepcha place still in existence. In all other parts of Sikkim the people had intermarried with Tibetans and Nepalis to such an extent that they had lost all traces of tribal consciousness. Not so, however, in the Talung; for this valley formed part of the Maharaja's personal estate and none but Lepchas were permitted to own land or to settle in it.

114 On our return from Everest I talked the matter over with 609 the Maharaja. His Highness said he had no objection to my spending some months in the valley; but warned me that it might be difficult to get on speaking terms with the people, who had the reputation of being extremely shy and of

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the top of Kinchinjunga to the far banks of the Teesta, which we could see churning away a thousand feet below us. To which village did we wish to go? Our informant rattled off the names of the numerous alternatives with machine-gun rapidity, but so far as I was concerned one place was as good as another. I said that I wanted a large village and one where the houses were all close together, since this would facilitate work and enable us to camp in the middle. In answer to this it appeared that there were two possible alternatives: Lingtem and Lungden. The former was said to possess a fine new monastery, whereas Lungden had none; also it was slightly larger and a bit more inaccessible. I plumped for Lingtem, monasteries being very much in my line, and thither we decided to go the following morning.

Very early the next morning Palden came to my bedside. During the night he had been talking to the villagers (they are constantly in and out of Mangen), and they were not so certain that they wanted us now that they realised we wished to stay in Lingtem for at least some months. They were suspicious of our motives, so he said, and were afraid that we had come to enlist them for some sort of service elsewhere. He also said that he was unable to allay their suspicions, since he himself, to be quite frank, was a bit uncertain about it all.

The Jongu people had of course seen plenty of Europeans. Most of them went from time to time to Gangtok, and many had been as far afield as Kalimpong and Darjeeling: also on several occasions the members of the various Kinchinjunga expeditions had passed through their valley; but this was a very different matter from settling down to stay for months in one village.

Amongst the Lingtem men was one Tempa who, I discovered, spoke Nepali fluently: also he was a man of some position in the village. I sent for him. I told him why we had come: that we Europeans had made a sorry mess of the business of living: that we had forgotten to a great extent what it meant to be happy. I told him also that at one time the people of Europe, too, had lived lives as free and

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

485 though walking about was almost as difficult as on a swinging suspension-bridge. At last we were by ourselves; there was no communication between the two rooms except from the outside, but there were so many chinks in the walls that we thought it advisable to improvise a screen with our rugs and shawls, and then we were able to change our wet clothes and hang them on the many bamboos crossed above the fireplace to be dried and well smoked! We were not a little 136 horrified to find that our feet and ankles were covered with leeches. I got off fairly well, but my husband, who had walked nearly all day, had at least twenty on him. I had knocked two off his neck before, and now he found one in his hair. When empty their bodies were like long black threads about the thickness of vermicelli, but when full of blood they were huge, soft, black lumps. It was most repulsive to have them taken off one. These hill-leeches are much smaller and darker in colour than the domestic leech, but the bite must be poisonous in some way, for, although not felt at the time, they cause considerable irritation of the skin for many weeks afterwards."

Ibid.

Monasteries.

792 "There is a great similarity in all these buildings, but the 346 Pemiongchi *goompa* is larger than most of them, though the ●[77] outside seemed less interesting to us, because it had a corrugated iron roof. There were also common glass window-panes round one of the altars. Inside was a great wealth of ugly idols and hideous masks, and it was painful to see our Nepalese coolie prostrating himself with awed face before the latter. Some of the frescoes on the walls were particularly gaudy and revolting; the lamas we saw here were of a low order, and had not the attractive faces we had sometimes met with among these Buddhist priests. To add to 712 the generally unfavourable opinion we had received, some cooking vessels carried by Teptook, and which he had respectfully left at the door when he went in, were stolen,

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

sickness or misfortune befell, therefore deemed it requisite to propitiate them, which they did by offerings of rice, etc. The first fruits of the season were always offered to the Good Spirit. I may state that the purity of their belief was, at a period antecedent to our arrival, somewhat perverted by the introduction from Tibet of the Buddist religion; it has, and still has, however, but little hold on them. . . .

"The British Government has again conferred on the Sikkim ruler an annual and larger allowance, to be enjoyed as long as order is maintained in his dominions. Since then the country has become more tranquil and, as far as the snows (but no farther), is again thrown open to visitors. Sikkim, however, is fast deteriorating. The influx of the Bhutias has increased, and the power of the Buddhists has become firmly established; the Gurkhas have also commenced to settle in it, and the grandest and most glorious scenery in the world is becoming completely destroyed. With the destruction of the forests in Sikkim, the charm of the country will pass away, the climate will change, and unless speedy measures be taken to prevent it, the Lepchas will pine, and in time cease to exist. Much more might be said, but enough has been represented to account for the deplorable fall of the Lepchas.

"Of the language I cannot speak too highly. The simple and primitive state in which the Lepchas lived is admirably shown. It has no primary words (beyond the words for gold and silver) to express money, merchants or merchandise, fairs or markets. Their peaceful and gentle character is evinced by their numerous terms of tenderness and compassion, and by the fact that not one word of abuse exists in their language. . . . Of all the almost inconceivable diversity of trees with which the hills are covered; of all the almost incalculable variety of plants and flowers with which the forests are filled; the Lepchas can tell you the names of all, they can distinguish at a glance the difference in the species of each genus of plants, which would require the skill of a practised botanist to perceive; and this information

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

would otherwise ensue during his absence on state business.

Every Mandal has under him several assistants known as *Karbari*. The number of these is not fixed and is at the discretion of individual headmen. Karbaris are appointed for a period of three years, and with the exception of Lamas everyone takes on the duty in turn. The roster goes on indefinitely, so that if any particular man is not called upon during his own lifetime the turn devolves upon his son. There is no pay nor any other material advantage in the office of Karbari, but it is not unpopular, since it gives the holder a certain amount of authority.

When a man has retired from the office of Karbari he is eligible for the appointment of *Youmi*. At present time there are four Youmis in Lingtem. Whenever any matter crops up which can only be decided by reference to customary law the Mandal calls in the Youmis to aid him in giving a decision. They are usually very old men, and because of this they can decide such matters as whether there is any reason why a particular couple should not be married: or if one man runs off with the wife of another what compensation he should be required to pay, and so on. The word *Youmi* does not appear in the dictionary and I do not know what it means. I believe, however, that the office may be a survival of tribal administration. It is not known in other parts of Sikkim.

There is no *per capita* tax in Sikkim but every house pays five rupees a year. In addition to this there is a tax of one rupee for each sixteen pounds of dry rice sown, and the same for maize. Rice grown wet, in terraced fields (a recent innovation), is taxed at eight annas for eight pounds of seed, but barley, buckwheat, and wheat are free. The economics of Lingtem, and indeed of most parts of Sikkim, are now based upon the cardamom, the sale of which is a state monopoly. The market price of cardamoms fluctuates from year to year, and for this reason the tax is adjusted to a sliding scale. When the rate is ten rupees a maund (approximately eighty pounds) the cultivator pays a tax of fourteen annas a maund; one and a half rupees when the

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 8

Houses and House-building

342 THE ordinary Lepcha house is extremely simple and generally contains but two rooms, one of which is used as a kitchen. In appearance it does not differ, except in size, from the monastery, which I take to be the prototype of Sikkim domestic architecture.

174 346 It seems likely that in Tibet the original monasteries also served as forts, as is often still the case. In view of the unsettled state of that country there was need for the people to keep close together; so that instead of living in scattered houses they all lived together inside the forts. As conditions became more peaceful the need to live in close proximity to others became gradually less urgent, but when the people came to build their own houses it was natural that they should take the local fort or monastery as their model, since they had none other. I am not suggesting that this also happened in Sikkim; and the transition in Tibet had probably taken place long before the Lepchas took to living in permanent houses. Sikkim, however, has always been in close cultural contact with Tibet; and in no way is the influence of the latter country more marked than in the local style of architecture. The extremely wet climate of Sikkim has of course made certain modifications necessary. Of these the most striking is the wide overhanging roof, which often projects as much as fifteen feet in front of the walls. It is one of the most pleasing features of all Sikkim houses, and has the additional advantage of keeping the walls completely dry throughout the rainy season.

In Tibet, monasteries, and in fact most houses, are usually built with very thick walls: they are sometimes as much as ten feet thick at the base. It is improbable that such thickness

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 9

Agriculture and Kindred Subjects

THE main crops in Lingtem are rice (grown both "dry" and "wet," the latter in terraced fields), millet, buckwheat, maize, and barley. The method of growing rice under water in terraced fields, which the Nepali has brought to a fine art, was apparently only introduced into Lingtem some twenty years ago, although Hooker mentions it as being commonly employed in other parts of Sikkim, which he visited as long ago as 1848.

Most Lepchas seem to think that rice grown in terraces is somewhat sweeter to the taste; but that rice grown dry is more nourishing. To me, and I imagine to most Europeans, one kind of rice tastes much the same as another: but people who have made this crop their staple diet are as critical of the various brands as a sunbaked colonel is of his port. But whether dry rice is actually more nourishing is at least open to doubt: what, however, is certain is that the construction of terraces for growing rice under water entails very considerable labour; and I imagine that the Lepcha's natural indolence has led him to prefer the dry variety.

Such terraced fields as there were in Lingtem were badly kept and inefficiently constructed. It would be perfectly easy, as my Nepali servant constantly pointed out, to increase the yield considerably. The point is, however, that the present arrangement gives the Lepcha all he wants to eat. Beyond this he is not interested, for the idea of personal wealth is here not greatly esteemed. From one point of view this is, of course, a most desirable state of affairs. I fear, however, that in the case of the Lepchas it comes more from his indolent habits that from any innate socialist feeling, although this is not entirely absent. There is no doubt, to

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

House-building and general repairs are also carried out at these times.[342] Cardamoms are perennial and are planted in March and[356] April, being grown from cuttings. The plants bear in the[249] third year, and are at their best in the fourth, fifth, and sixth years, after which they are rooted up. If raised from seed the plants take from seven to eight years to mature. The fields have to be constantly weeded, especially at flowering time, since the flowers are close to the ground. When the cardamoms are gathered the flowered stem is removed, but the leaves are left intact.

I do not know when cardamoms were introduced into Sikkim, but Hooker, a most observant traveller, and a botanist moreover, makes no mention of them. Their cultivation, however, is now of great economic importance all over the State; but this aspect of the subject will be dealt with later.

It is believed in Jongu that cardamoms were introduced [177] from Nepal, although I understand that the plant is not cultivated in that country; and certainly I have never seen it in such parts of Eastern Nepal as I have visited.

Menstruating women may not go near the cardamom[841] plants, especially when they are in flower; nor should anyone[784] who has used strong-smelling soap approach them, for this is[249] offensive to the flowers. For the same reason the cardamom fields should never be used as latrines. It may be noted that all over Nepal menstruation is intimately connected with certain kinds of cultivation. A woman in this state may not, [244] for instance, approach pumpkins, chillies, cucumbers, or egg-plants, or they will rot away: if they have only reached the flowering stage they will not set. It is thought that the smell of menstrual blood causes the damage, and that no harm will ensue if the woman thoroughly washes her body before going near the plants. Apart from this no one should point a [244] finger at ripening pumpkins or cucumbers: nor should one talk loudly in their presence, or they will certainly rot away.

All these ideas are known to the people of Lingtem, and[249] may possibly have been introduced by Tempa, who lived[177]

1/1 [i.e., during Oct., Nov. and Dec.--Analyst]

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

amongst Nepalis for years. They are not, however, regarded, except in the case of cardamoms; and only then "because a wandering mendicant brought the first plants from Nepal, and these instructions were given with them."

Every cardamom field has a small erection in one corner. It is called *Mung Li* (Devil's house), and looks like a square beehive on legs. It is made for the accommodation of a devil called Thyok Dum, whose chief joy appears to be the destruction of cardamom plants. If given a house, however, he causes no damage.

Rice, *chi*, maize, meat and fish, together with a few coins, are placed in the house twice each year; just before the rice and barley harvests. These offerings remain in position until changed. Anyone who can read, but not a Lama, may place the offering in position; and with the exception of this particular person, no one should approach nearer than several yards to the *Mung Li* or he will be taken seriously ill. These erections are found only in cardamom fields; other crops being considered to have no need of such protection.

* * * * *

It is believed that agriculture in general was introduced into Lingtem by the mythical inhabitants of Mayel, a place on the slopes of Kinchinjunga which it is no longer possible to reach. There are in Mayel seven men and seven women, who live in seven houses. They are children at dawn and old people at night; but they never grow older in years. They have, moreover, the peculiar property of being invisible, except during the first few hours of each day. They would seem also to have solved the problem of birth control, for no babies have ever been born in Mayel.

It is said in Lingtem that the people of Mayel built the Maharaja's original palace in Fyung-Di, the walls of which are still standing. When they had completed the work they started to return, going by way of the Teesta and Talung valleys, and were followed by the progenitors of the Lepcha tribe. The whole party went along quite happily until they

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

this three times, very solemnly and in the form of an oath. After this the Mandal's luck changed, but the other man never again killed an animal. This is a true story.

Before a hunter can make sacrifices to Pong Rum he must first learn how. He takes a present of *chi* and rice to some experienced hunter and asks to be instructed: but he must take care that no woman knows what he is doing. The teacher will then make an offering to the god, at the same time telling it that in future the boy will make the sacrifice himself, and that he should therefore be pleased to accept it. The young hunter now sits with his back to the teacher, who goes through the sacrificial formula phrase by phrase. He does this very slowly, so that the boy may commit the words to memory. By sitting with his back to the teacher his mind is not distracted and he is thus able to concentrate better. As soon as he can repeat the words correctly he may make the sacrifice himself; but the next time he kills an animal he will do the sacrifice in the presence of his teacher. If he makes a mistake the teacher taps him gently on the shoulder, but he makes no comment. That particular sacrifice, however, is ineffective, and the boy must come again. He does this until he is word-perfect, but need take no further presents to his teacher.

The bow is the weapon most commonly used in Jongu, both for hunting and for killing domestic cattle. It is made of bamboo and strung with toughened fibre made from the young shoots of a special kind of tree-fern. Arrows are made from the stems of the *Parong* (*Deeringia celosiodes*) and tipped with kites' feathers. The arrow-head, which is detachable and usually remains in the kill, is made from *Payung* wood (*Actinodaphne Sikkimensis*) and is smeared with aconite; but metal arrow-heads, imported from Gangtok, are nowadays replacing the home-made wooden variety. Domestic cattle are killed with unpoisoned arrows, fired at the heart from a distance of only a yard or two. The arrow-holder is merely a length of hollow bamboo fitted with a cap, and is slung over the shoulder with a length of cane. Cane,

291
142

Town-bred. A Gangtok Lepcha boy. Judging from his headgear I surmise that some relative is a servant at the British Residency.

[301
177]

[385
301]

Country-bred. Note the necklace of snail shells.

[facing p.211]

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 11

Marriage and General Relations between the Sexes

595 CONTRARY to the reports of earlier travellers, the Lepchas (at least in Jongu) do not practise polyandry, except in very rare circumstances. It is true that their customs permit it; but in actual practice two brothers only share a wife when one is continuously away from home. The only known cases have already been noted in the chapter of personal histories. When polyandry does occur it is always, as in Tibet, what is technically known as adelphic polyandry, that is to say the co-husbands are always brothers; and in discussing the subject the idea that a woman could be married to two men who were not themselves brothers (in the full biological sense) appeared never to have entered the people's heads. Whether it would be possible for a woman to marry more than two brothers at a time I do not know, since a case of this sort has not occurred in Jongu. I imagine that
● [77] polyandry, such as it is in Jongu, has arisen entirely as a result of contact with Tibetans. It appears to be unknown among Lepchas of other districts, and in discussing the subject the Mandal was definitely ashamed to own that it sometimes occurred. "It is not a good thing," he said; "but it is common among Tibetans, and is sometimes a convenience when one brother is more or less permanently away from home. For this reason I have occasionally recommended, as in the case of Pichi and his brother, that a girl should be married to two brothers."

595 837 A distinction must, however, be drawn between marriage and sexual relations: for while it is unusual for a Lepcha girl to be actually married to more than one man, it is common for her occasionally to sleep with all his younger brothers. The important point to note, however, is that she is not married

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

of course, in addition to the actual cash contributed by the guests at the *Ong kay* already described.

There is a modified form of betrothal ceremony known as *Ah-kut*, which is done by people who cannot afford the full *Ashyek* payments. It consists in the presentation of one pig's carcass to the bride's parents. No one would willingly be married by means of *Ah-kut*, which may be compared with our marriage by Registrar, if he could possibly afford to carry out the full ceremony, for it is a point of honour with Lepchas to entertain one's friends to the full limit of one's purse; and a failure to do so, should funds be available, would be to stamp oneself as a mean fellow and a bad co-operator. *Ah-kut*, however, constitutes full legal marriage, and no further ceremony is necessary.

Except for the additional wives a man may acquire by inheritance Lepchas do not normally marry a second wife unless the first proves to be childless. The custom of marrying additional wives would appear to be an importation, probably through contact with Nepalis, for the language does not contain any specific word to denote a second wife, the Nepali word *Kanchi* being commonly used for this purpose. I am, of course, aware that it is dangerous to base an hypothesis of this sort on linguistic evidence alone; but it is significant that in other parts of Sikkim and adjacent British India Lepchas are monogamous except for the additional wives some acquire by inheritance.

In Jongu it appears that a childless woman nearly always induces her husband to marry again. If possible he will take one of his first wife's sisters, or possibly a niece; but in any case he should try and obtain some sort of relative of his wife, since this arrangement is thought to cause less domestic friction than might otherwise be the case. It sometimes happens, however, that a man decides to remarry without reference to his first wife (as in the case of Aga, for instance), in which case the new wife must give a present, known as *Thim seut*. It does not take any special form. The new wife should also give something to the eldest child of the first wife.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 13

Economics

●177 MOST books dealing with primitive peoples contain at least one depressing chapter on the evils resulting from European contact, either through missionaries, education, or trading; but in this particular case the British Government, which has indeed made far too many mistakes in India, can be held completely blameless, in view of the fact that Sikkim is an independent state; and although one or two missionaries have been allowed to work in the country they have so far not been permitted to [426] carry on their activities in Jongu. But every piece must have its villain; and in Jongu he is the local money-lender.

[651] 437 426 Although the people are very lightly taxed, the provision of the actual cash necessary for this purpose has introduced a complicating factor, for prior to the introduction of direct taxation the Lepchas depended entirely upon barter for such few of their needs as they could not themselves produce. Indeed, they still use only this system in dealings among themselves. Suppose, for instance, that a man has a surplus of grain at the end of the season. He does not sell it, but either makes it into *chi* or loans it to some fellow-villager who may be short of food. If the borrower repays the loan within one year no interest is charged: otherwise fifty per cent is added to the principal when the loan is repaid—in kind, of course. In return for the use of plough oxen it is usual to give the lender eight pounds of grain per day; but if a bullock is required for a sacrifice or ceremony it is usual to repay the loan in kind. If this cannot be done for some considerable time the borrower usually takes a chicken and some *chi* to the lender, but apart from this no interest is charged.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

It is very interesting to compare the size of the Jongu families with that of the Christian Lepcha community in the Kalimpong district, details of which I have given in Appendix I. It is true that the latter are strictly monogamous, a fact which tends, at first sight, to support your theory; but I find that the non-Christian Lepchas in the district have equally large families. I should add, however, that there is a marked tendency even among them to drop the old custom of inheriting one's deceased elder brother's wife; and I am told that the sexual rights of brothers are here not regarded.

As a result of comparing these figures I have come to the conclusion that the reason why the Lepchas in Jongu are dying out is to a great extent psychological, although I should find it difficult to support this theory with adequate scientific evidence. The Jongu people *know* they are a dying race, and realise perfectly well that they have only been able to retain their separate entity as long as they have by reason of the artificial protection afforded them by making Jongu a Lepcha reserve. Left to themselves they were bound to be submerged; for the admirable customs of co-operation and sharing without regard to individual interests, which are the most pleasing and striking characteristics of their culture, are not yet sufficiently appreciated even in the so-called civilised parts of the world; and when they came into contact with the predatory Nepalese, who have no socialist feelings, something was bound to happen, since the Lepchas had no means of defending themselves; nor is it in their nature to oppose force of any sort. Nor, I think, does their religion give them anything to hold on to, for the Buddhism practised in Jongu has degenerated into little more than an elaboration of the original propitiation of evil spirits to which these people were always enslaved.

I am no advocate of Christian missionaries, for I think that in many parts of the world they have done more harm than good to many primitive communities; and it has always seemed to me a form of arrogance to destroy existing, and in many cases excellent, religions and replace them with

3: Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Hunting and fishing among the Lepchas

R. DE NEBESKY-WOJKOWITZ
Kalimpong, Bengal

224 Hunting, which formed only a century ago a substantial part of the economy of the Lepchas[1] — the aboriginal inhabitants of the Himalayan State of Sikkim — is at present gradually decreasing in importance, in proportion with the development of agriculture and the breeding of cattle. Many of the Lepcha men still pursue hunting occasionally, but more in the way of a useful pastime and only a few professional hunters can be found nowadays.

223 224 262 The animals hunted are birds — only those, which do not feed on carrion and meat in general, being considered fit for consumption — hares, deer, musk deer, stags, bear and wild pigs. Some of these animals are hunted not only for their meat but also in order to obtain some parts of the body which are valued as medicines, e. g. the bile and liver of a bear, the bones of certain birds, etc. — Crows, rats and mice who attack the crops, are killed as well, but not eaten. Occasionally, a leopard or man-eating tiger is trapped, but their meat is not touched. The hunting of elephants and rhinos which was rather popular at one time, judging from the numerous accounts still circulating among the Lepchas, does not seem to be practised anymore.

784 177 224 A religious prohibition which is, however, not always strictly kept, exists against the killing, and especially the eating, of monkeys, who frequently invade the fields and cause considerable damage. No other *tabu* seems to exist, except the prohibition of killing a white

3:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
AK5 Lepcha AK5

784 elephant, a custom having its origin in the Buddhist religion, which
177 began to spread among the Lepchas four centuries ago.[2] Otherwise,
224 all animals can be hunted at any time, except when having young.

411 The main weapon of a Lepcha hunter is the bow (*să li*). It is
[283] always made of bamboo, with a string (*să li grím*) made either of the same material or from a nettle plant, called *kŭ ju*; the best bow-strings, however, are manufactured from the fibres of the *kă fit* tree. The bamboo, which is used for making the bow, has to be carefully selected. It should be cut at the height of the dry season (December—January) from a bamboo growing at a high altitude and in an open spot, where its stem has been frequently bent by the wind. Before using the new bow, it has to be smoked for some time and also later, the bow as well as the arrows rest always on a bamboo platform (*pŭn hróp*), which one finds in Lepcha houses suspended above the open hearth. The bow is kept released and is only spanned when it has to be used.

Arrows (*tsóng*) are made preferably of a reed (*mók tu*) or, less frequently, of bamboo. Normally three steering feathers (*tsóng ro*) — the feathers of a kite or duck being preferred — are set into cuts made previously in the reed and are afterwards glued and fastened with strings. A deep, square or oblong cut (*dem*) is made to receive the bow-string and, lastly, the portion of the reed holding the steering feathers is painted black. To some of the hunting arrows, however, no steering feathers are attached. The barbed arrow head (*tsóng thyak*) is made of iron; it possesses either a short conical metal tube, which receives the shaft or has a short iron rod, which is pushed into the shaft. In the latter case, the end of the shaft is then tightly bound with a string and impregnated with resin. Arrows used to scare away thieves, and the toy arrows of children, do not possess iron points but carry instead a short bamboo tube on the front of the shaft, to render the missile harmless.

411 Sometimes poisoned arrows are used for hunting and formerly also
278 for warfare. The poison most frequently applied for this purpose
224 is aconite (*pă ki*). An aconite root is kept ready by the hunter and

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

ANCIENT FUNERAL CEREMONIES OF THE LEPCHAS

R. NEBESKY DE WOJKOWITZ

177 The teachings and rites of the Unreformed School of Tibetan Buddhism—nowadays the dominant creed in the Sikkim State—have deeply influenced the beliefs and religious practices of the Lepchas, the main group of aboriginal inhabitants in the Sikkim area. In the course of four centuries, which passed since the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism into Sikkim,[1] the original Lepcha traditions became so closely intermingled with ideas and customs of Tibetan origin,[2] that it is now a most difficult task to separate these two groups from each other; this state is still more complicated by the fact that the Lepchas accepted—even if only in a smaller degree—also some of the traditions and customs of the neighbouring Mangars, Limbus,[3] Nepalese and Bhutanese. Among many other customs also ideas concerning the human soul, death and its causes, life after death, etc., as well as the funeral ceremonies themselves were greatly changed under Tibetan influence. Thus the belief in a judgement of the soul by the Lord of the Dead, *Cho ge pă no*[4] (Tb. *Chhos kyi rgyal po*), the migration of the soul through the perils of the *Bar do*[5] (Tb. *Bar do*)—the stage between death and new life—and its rebirth in one of the "six worlds", the punishment of sinners in hell or *Nyó lyang* (Tb. *dMyal ba*), and other well known theories of Tibetan Buddhism are therefore today [764] widely spread among the Lepchas. Oral tradition, however, preserved accounts of the early Lepcha customs and in some of the remote, scarcely accessible valleys of Sikkim the old funeral rites are said to be still observed.

774 According to the old Lepcha belief,[6] the soul[7] is given to a human being by *Fă gróng thíng* and his wife *Nă zóng nyo*, the ancestors of the 775 Lepcha race,[8] at the moment of birth. *Nă zóng nyo*, who is also responsible for the conception, determines of which sex the child is going to be. The place from which the soul comes and to which it again returns after a man's death, is called *Rŭm lyang*, "the place of gods". It is believed, that this place lies somewhere in the hills, close to Mount Kanchenjunga.[9] The soul, once it has returned to the *Rŭm lyang*, will stay there with the spirits of the ancestors and not reincarnate in this world again. It also will not have to undergo any punishment for the sins, which the deceased might have committed during his lifetime.

At the time of birth, the soul is believed to be very small, but later on it becomes gradually bigger, keeping pace with the growth of the body. The soul of a living being is called *A pil* and it

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

on the forehead to be presented by the spirit to *Fă grŏng thing*, the male ancestor of the Lepchas. A half seer of rice was measured, wrapped in a piece of cloth and placed at the side of the dead, "to serve as food on the road"; while in common life always a heaped measure is taken, in this case the measure is linear. 764

The corpse was taken out of the house by an opening, which had been made either in a wall or in the floor, as the dead was not supposed to leave his former residence by the door. After the corpse had been brought into the open, it was placed on a bamboo stetcher or—according to Tibetan custom—its legs were bent, the knees drawn towards the chin and then fastened in this position with a band. In the latter case, the body was ultimately placed into an old basket and then carried on the back by anybody strong enough, to the cemetery. The top of the basket was usually covered with a piece of nice, embroidered cloth, which however was not burried along with the dead.

Today, in consequence of Tibetan influence, the dead are burnt on pyres and the ashes immerged in a river. The Sikkimese lamas, who introduced this custom, claim that by burning a dead one certainly avoids his soul becoming the victim of a malignant spirit and thus the old rites of freeing a soul from the power of a demon or the recalling of the *Mŭk nyam*, which were formerly performed by a *Mŭn*, became unnecessary. Nowadays, the majority of the Lepcha people burn their dead and only in a few very remote places some of the old funeral customs, like the recalling of the *Mŭk nyam*, are still practised. Mostly however, lamas are called today into the house to conduct the necessary ceremonies and to guide the soul on the way to the other world, as prescribed by the Buddhist religion; very frequently however also a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* are fetched to say simultaneously some prayers according to Lepcha tradition. 764 177

In former times, very elaborate funeral ceremonies were performed and it was customary, to bury the dead in graves. Some details of these ceremonies as well as the form of the grave varied with the different clans and localities. 764

It seems, that at least three different types of grave were developed by the various Lepcha clans:[14]

(a) The *cŏk*, a pit-grave with a circular base; the dead was placed in this grave either in a reclining or erect position, his face turned towards Mt. Kanchenjunga.

(b) A pit-grave called *cŏk den*,—with a square base—into which the corpse was put in erect position and facing Kanchenjunga.

(c) An oblong grave, the *cŏk bli*, in which the dead was buried in a reclining position, turned in the same manner as before,

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
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confusion of legends concerning Padmasambhava and the God Creator of the Lepchas, the traditions are today rather vague. According to some previous publications (e.g. Mainwaring, G.B. : A Grammar of the Rong (Lepcha) language, Calcutta 1878, p. XI) the name of the God Creator was *Ta she thing*. I heard however very frequently also the statement that the name of this chief god was *Tuk bo thing*, who was followed several thousand years later by another supernatural being called *Ta she thing*.

9. This most prominent mountain of Sikkim occupies a very important place in the ancient traditions of the Lepchas as well as in the religious life all Sikkimese Buddhists. For accounts of Lepcha ceremonies in honour of Mount Kanchenjunga see Gorer, G. Himalayan Village, London 1938, pp. 201—203; Morris, J. : Living with Lepchas, London 1938, pp. 274—276; R. Nebesky de Wojkowitz and G. Gorer : The use of thread-crosses in Lepcha lamaist ceremonies, The Eastern Anthropologist, Vol. IV., No. 2, Lucknow 1951, pp. 70—73. Some notes, concerning the mountain god of Kanchenjunga (Tb. *Gangs chhen mdzod lnga*, "The five glacier treasuries") as venerated by the Buddhists of Sikkim, are to be found in Ribbach, S. H.: Vier Bilder des Padmasambhava und seiner Gefolgschaft, Hamburg 1917, and Hoffmann, H. : Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Boen Religion, Akademie der Wissenschaften, Mainz 1950.

10. Compare Gorer, Himalayan Village, p. 192

11. Compare Dictionary of the Lepcha Language, p. 114b.

12. The *Bong thing* and *Mun* are the main sorcerers of the Lepchas. A *Bong thing* is always male, a *Mun* mostly female, sometimes also male. The position of *Mun* and *Bong thing* is inherited within the family, one of its members being chosen for this task by the supernaturals, who protect and at times also possess him. With the help of their guardian deities the *Bong thing* and *Mun* are able to avert and counteract the influence of malignant spirits, cure illness, etc. It is also their task to perform the numerous ceremonies, devoted to the worship of benevolent deities and to the appeasement of demons, as well as to carry out all rites connected with the more important events of Lepcha life. They are believed to be in possession of strong supernatural powers, which at times were also used to harm people. Thus the Chronicles of the Maharajas mention, that at the beginning of the 18th century several Lepcha sorcerers tried to kill by black magic the reigning fourth Maharaja, *Phyag rdor rnam rgyal*. Also to his successor *Chhos rgyal kgyur med rnam rgyal*, who had ascended the throne in 1717, some Lepcha magicians tried to show their skill: they made a knot into the water of a fountain and suspended a stone from the sky, they draw figures on the surface of water, span sand into a rope and at last they made the roofs of the Maharajas palace and a neighbouring temple meet. While the ruler with his retinue were very impressed by these miracles, some lamas who had also come to witness this spectacle, were not affected by the powers displayed and they subsequently killed the magicians, claiming that they were imposters.

Another group of Lepcha sorcerers are men called *Pa wo* (Tb. *dPa bo*) and their female counterparts, who bear the name *Nyen jo mo* (Tb. *rNal hbyor ma*). They are said to become possessed by Tibetan deities, who cause them to speak Tibetan in the trance and who advice them in matters of divination. The *Pa wo* and *Nyen jo mo* dress in Tibetan garments and they use Tibetan lama bell (*Dril bu*) and a small, two-faced drum (*rNga chhung*) as their main instruments. They preserved many traditions of the ancient, pre-Buddhist Boen faith of Tibet and their performances have therefore nothing to do with the ceremonies of the Sikkimese lamas, of whom they are entirely independent.

A third group of Lepcha sorcerers, also of minor importance, are the *Ya bo* and *Ya mo*, who are male and female respectively. They are supposed to become possessed by Limbu spirits and they therefore bear these two names, under which the Limbu sorcerers are known. Their main instruments are metal gongs and divination balls, called Yak. Certain similarities between religious practices of the Lepcha sorcerers and some ancient Tibetan customs are the reason for frequently occuring statements in books on Tibet, that the old Lepcha faith is identical with the Boen religion of that country. A comparative study of both beliefs shows however, that the Lepcha faith is certainly not identical with that form of the Boen religion, which it assumed after the commencement of its struggle with Buddhism. It seems rather that it corresponds in many points to the old shamanistic stratum of Central Asia, out of which in Tibet the Boen developed to a religion.

5:Nebesky-Wojkowitz and Gorer E,J-5 (1937, 1950)1951
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Tibetans. They are reported to be used by the Mongols who call them *ôngge*, "colour", makhabut "body" or torgaguli "obstacle", the last name certainly refering to their ritual purpose. It seems, however, that their use has become very rare in Mongolia in more recent times.[18]

Other reports show that thread-crosses are used by the Kachin and some of the Naga tribes, especially in death ceremonies, and for averting or destroying evil.[19]

Further to the southwest we find, that thread-crosses are extensively used in the religious ceremonies of the Lepchas of Sikkim. The Lepchas, who adhere today to Tibetan Buddhism, have preserved some practices of their original religion, which—after the name of its priests—is called the Mun religion.[20] Consequently there is a mixture of rites and beliefs of both religions and it is very difficult to state with certainty, which of the rites and religious ideas originated from the Mun or from Lamaism. This situation is made still more complicated by the fact that the Buddhist teachings introduced into Sikkim were those of the unreformed *rNying ma pa*, the "Old Sect", which preserved in its religious practices many customs originating from the Bön, which, however, have scarcely been studied up to now.

How closely the Mun religion and Lamaism became associated among the Lepchas is shown by the fact that many of the Lepcha ceremonies are concurrently performed by Mun priests and lamas.

Thread-crosses are called in Lepcha *deu*—corresponding to the Tibetan *Do*, *mDos*—or *Yeu*, an equivalent of the Tibetan *Ye*, *Yas*. As to the meaning of the thread-cross, it is generally regarded by Lepcha lamas as a "seat", "house" or "place" for supernatural beings. The tufts of wool, which are fastened to the thread-cross or are placed on top of bamboo sticks planted near the structure are supposed to represent clouds, surrounding the "palace".

The remainder of this paper consists of details of Lepcha ceremonies in which thread-crosses are used. Some of these ceremonies have already been described and only short accounts will be given of these; in most cases there

5:Nebesky-Wojkowitz and Gorer E,J-5 (1937, 1950)1951
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This image is placed upon a base, formed by covering a bamboo stretcher with earth and braken and superimposing upon it squares of turf, each smaller than the other, with the grass facing down. The nine-storied *deu* is planted into the topmost turf immediately behind the figure. On the lower steps of the base, a great number of cones made of dough and covered with pieces of coloured cotton is placed. These cones, called *diget*, represent the servants of the *mamoo*. On the four corners of the second layer, four *yeu* are planted: in front in the right-hand corner blue, on the left white, in the rear left yellow and in the rear right red. In the topmost layer as well as into the second one, several flat wooden sticks, called *Tamsing* by the Lepchas, and small sticks bearing tufts of wool—termed *pong* or *bamgyal*—are planted. On the lowest step, a wall called *po ryum*, with a gap in front, is erected around the last turf square. Opposite this gap, inside the enclosure, four small vessels containing milk, tea and strained Lepcha beer are placed. On the right and left outside of the wall, crossed arrows and spindles are stuck into the base, the arrows being put on the right, the spindles on the left, when facing the structure. According to the explanation given by the priests, the arrows represent the male element, while the spindles stand for the female. Finally, various flowers are put around the lowest base.

The ceremony is continued by offering food and various objects to the *mamoo* and other spirits and then by chanting of prayers. Towards the evening, when the ceremony comes to an end, the *deu* with the dough images is carried across three streams and then thrown away. If the images are eaten by animals within three days, it is regarded as a sign that the gods were pleased with the offerings made to them; if the effigies remain untouched, bad fortune may be expected in the near future.

There are several similarities to be found between this Lepcha rite and old Tibetan religious customs and thoughts. The name of the special thread-cross, *mamoo yam deu*, is derived from Tibetan. Indeed, one of the Tibetan thread-

5:Nebesky-Wojkowitz and Gorer E,J-5 (1937, 1950) 1951
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crosses is called *ma mo mDos*, "The thread-cross of the *ma mo*" and is dedicated to supernatural beings called *ma mo*. This thread-cross seems to be an especially important form, as there is a special Tibetan book on its construction. The *ma mo's* are represented by Tibetan artists as fierce and terrifying female demons; they are frequently met with in Tibetan iconography, where twelve Great *ma mo's* (*ma mo chhen mo*) accompany Yama (*gShin rje*) as his messengers.[24] Since the *mamoo* of the Lepchas is also a female deity and as she has snakes instead of hair and is riding a yawning tiger, she should be regarded as a malignant spirit, most probably belonging or at least related to the *ma mo* group of the Tibetans.

The second syllable in the name of the thread-cross *yam*—seems to correspond to the Tibetan honorific expression for mother, *yum*. This Tibetan word is frequently used in the names of lamaist goddesses and particularly denotes the female consorts or "energies" of Tantric gods. As already mentioned, the word *Deu* corresponds to the Tibetan word *mDos*.

It is interesting to note that this thread-cross is nine-storied, as the number nine is very frequently used in the Bón religion, where many of the deities are depicted as nine headed, are placed into groups of nine, etc.[25] The colour of the thread used for constructing the big *Deu*[26] and especially the colour of the four smaller thread-crosses which are planted in the four corners of the topmost square is nearly identical with the colours attributed to the four main quarters of the world by lamaist traditions: East white (or brown), South yellow (blue), West blue-green (red) and North black (yellow).

As for the story of the Tibetan king Dayom it was not possible to find a parallel in Tibetan mythology. But it may be mentioned, that in an old Tibetan record recently made available in a translation by Prof. Tucci, it is said that the king of the *bDud* demons, called *Mi byams pa khrag po*, "The merciless with the bloody face", was living in a black castle with nine storeys or pinacles.[27]

5:Nebesky-Wojkowitz and Gorer E,J-5 (1937, 1950) 1951
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carried out, while the basket and the two wooden plates are dragged along the path to the door. Once in the open, the basket is put in a tree, the *Chien lut* carried away to some other place and the image of Debrong Panoh's mother is thrown into the water-fall of a stream.

This rite contains some of the Bŏn elements mentioned before; further more this thunder and hail demon strongly resembles the appearance of gods as described by the Bonpos. Like many of the Bŏn deities, it is the personification of a natural phenomenon, depicted in the usual Bonpo manner, with nine faces and eighteen hands.

(5) For exorcising an evil-spirit, who is causing an illness, several books must be chanted by a lama and two *deu*, called in Lepcha *chemen gedo* and *lumoo gedo* set upon a path. These Lepcha expressions are derived from the Tibetan terms *mTsho sman rgyal mdos* and *kLu mo rgyal mdos*, which are applied for two different kinds of thread-crosses, dedicated to certain groups of Nagas (*kLu*).

(6) While curing the illness, which had befallen a child, a horoscope was cast by a lama and it was decided that besides other rites a red thread-cross, called Tsen Deu, should be constructed. This *deu* is doubtlessly identical with a red *mDos* of the Tibetans, the *bTsan mdos* (pronounced *Tsen do*), which is constructed for averting the evil influence of the red *bTsan* demons.[31]

4. CEREMONY, PERFORMED BY LAMAS AND MUN FOR AVERTING AN ILLNESS

After a Mun has sacrificed an ox, some lamas erect a *torma* and sprinkle consecrated water and then make a tortoise, called *robe* in Lepcha—which corresponds to the Tibetan *Rube, Rus sbal*—which is drawn with its belly upward in powdered rice on a large mat. Afterwards, a square with various numbers, called *Miwua* (in Tibetan *sMe ba*)[32], is inscribed upon the body of the tortoise, in the following way:

4	9	6
3	5	1
8	2	7

5:Nebesky-Wojkowitz and Gorer E,J-5 (1937, 1950)1951
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described,[12] we will only note here those details, which are of special interest to our subject. Again, a base is made of layers of earth and in the centre of the topmost square a black thread-cross is planted, while in the four corners four small images together with the same number of *yeu*, in white, yellow, green and red, are placed. Below, 13 other figures together with 13 black thread-crosses, 13 knives, 13 sickles and 13 bows and arrows are arranged. In front of this structure stands a pot with nine handles. Besides encountering here the number nine, which we already identified as the most important number of the Bonpos, we find here the number thirteen mentioned, which is also regarded as a ritual number of this ancient Tibetan faith. As for the name of the demon, to whom the ceremony is dedicated, it sounds very similar to the name of the so-called "foundation owners", the *Shidak* (*gZhi bdag*). They are a group of Tibetan supernatural beings who are supposed to dwell in the earth and when disturbed exercise an evil influence which might prove fatal to men.

It will be seen from the foregoing, that at the present stage, with the material available for comparison, it is impossible to state whether the Bön elements to be found incorporated in Lepcha religious ceremonies came from the original Bön religion, or whether they were introduced into them through the medium of the Red Hat Sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

NOTES

1 Spelled *Bon* in Tibetan. About the Bon religion see H. Hoffmann, *Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Bon Religion*, 1950, and the notes given by Prof. G. Tucci in his magnificent new work *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Rome 1949. For a sketch of this ancient Tibetan faith see R. Nebesky-Wojkowitz: Die tibetische Bon Religion, Archiv fur Volkerkunde, Vol. II, Vienna 1947, pp. 26-68 (Bibliography).

2 The distribution and use of thread-crosses in various parts of the world were described by W. Foy: *Fadensterne und Fadenkreuze*, I. Ethnologica II Leipzig 1913,, and by G. Lindblom: *Thread-crosses (Fadenkreuze), particularly in South America and Africa*, Ethnos, Vol. V, nos 3-4, Stockholm 1940.

3 The main works consulted are:

DAS S. CH. : 'The Bon Religion', *JASB*, Calcutta 1881 (p.196)

SCHLAGINTWEIT, E. : 'Le Bouddhisme au Tibet', *Annales du Musee Guimet, Paris* 1881 (Plate XXXVII)

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/269/ New Acquisitions from Sikkim and Tibet

by René Nebesky-Wojkowitz

One of the results of my three-years of ethnographic research in the Sikkim-Tibet border region, which I concluded in February, 1953, was the establishment of collections for the Ethnographic Museum /Museum für Völkerkunde/ in Vienna. The majority of the acquired objects are household implements, articles of clothing, ceremonial paraphernalia, and weapons of the Lepchas, the original inhabitants of the Himalaya kingdom of Sikkim. The Lepcha tribe, related in race and language to the Tibetans, has in the course of the last three centuries suffered a progressive narrowing of its living area as a result of the penetration of stronger neighbors. It now numbers only 30,000 members, most of whom live in Sikkim proper. A few scattered Lepcha settlements are still to be found in the vicinity of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and the Nepalese district of Ilam, and in two valleys of Bhutan. Because of extensive adoption of the customs of Nepalese immigrants, who today form the largest population group of Sikkim, the Lepchas have sacrificed many of their native characteristics. The establishment of this first Lepcha collection therefore was very difficult, for most of the objects formerly used by the Lepchas have been replaced in more recent times by products of Nepalese, Indian, or even European origin.

The household implements included in the collection are made for the most part of bamboo; we find among them variously shaped vessels, spoons and spatulas, a churn-staff /Butterstampfer/, baskets, a grain riddle, strainers, a scale with one balance as well as wooden dishes of varying sizes, which are used for the preparation of millet beer, the alcoholic beverage preferred by the Lepchas. The tribe's art of weaving, which today is practically extinct, is demonstrated by a hand loom containing an almost completed piece of weaving; it shows—just as a second, already completed strip of weaving does

say the Lepchas, the good spirits never do us any harm; it is only the malignant spirits which we have to fear. To propitiate the most malitious of the evil spirits are priests and priestesses or rather wizards, all of whom are absolutely illiterate — unable to read or write. And their ritual is of the most elementary and loosest kind. They live like the ordinary members of the tribe and have no temples, for the Lepchas have no images nor any visible objects of devotion, though lately some of them occasionally worship in Lama-temples.

The priest is called *Bong-ting* or 'Lord-Oracle' literally 'Mouth-Lord' [1]); the mouth-piece of communication between the poor Lepcha and the Great Spirit. But more in demand than the priest is the priestess, the *Mâân* or *Mâân-mak*, who may be the wife of the Bong-ting, though not necessarily so; and both of these offices are usually hereditary. This priestess or priest is resorted to in every case of serious disease, for the Lepcha believes that disease is always one to the machinations of an evil spirit and he has no faith at all in medicines. In the priestly rites there is no dancing as in the Shamanistic Bon of Central Asia. In their worship, which is of fear and not love, they invoke the *Mung* or other evil spirit by cutting a bamboo into pieces and sticking the pieces into the ground with bits of stone Then they propitiate the spirit with sacrifice of a fowl or a pig, and implore it to release its victim. Occasionally they perform sympathetic magic in cases of severe pain by drawing blood with a dry knife or spike of bamboo, without wounding the skin, like the Pawang wizards of the Malay Archipelago [2]). And so highly are these poor aboriginal priests esteemed, even by the immigrant Tibetans in Sikhim, that these latter, although professing the superior Lamaism, frequently condescend to employ these Lepcha priests and priestesses, in the belief that the latter hold especially close relations with the indigenous spirits of the country. It is a question how far this partiality for female priests may be a survival of the matriarchy before referred to, or whether it may be owing to most of the malignant divinities being female and so requiring a female priest.

Coming now to the songs themselves, we see that they are idyllic in character. Their words refer mostly to the inscrutable mystery of the origin and destiny of man and the primitive passion of love. It is curious to notice how they gratefully associate themselves with the Bamboo, whose stout stem supplies them with the sheltering frame-work, walls and thatch of their huts, with fuel, bows and arrows; its larger joints afford water-jugs, cooking pots and pans; its smaller joints supply bottles, smoking pipes and flutes; its branches make a springy couch; its bark supplies baskets, umbrellas and ropes, and its tender shoots are eaten as food. The songs are sung usually to the accompaniment of a flute or a sort of Jew's harp. This small harp is also used by the Nâgas and other Malayan races. It is made of bamboo and decorated by curving or burned in 'poker'-work with a plaited or basket-pattern. It is called *Tang-dyu* — the name *Tang* being apparently onomatopoetic for the twanging sound it produces. The flute called *Po-lit* is also of bamboo as its name denotes and it is decorated like the harp.

The melody of two of the chief of these songs I am able to give here through the

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[1]) This title is practically identical with the 'Gods' mouth (*Hla-k'a*) of the Bon religion. Cf. my Buddhism of Tibet p. 462. The term *Yok* or *Yok-mas* is usually applied to the Lamas and Nepalese priests, and may be a corruption of the Indian *Yogi*. An assistant-priest is called *Tyal-ba*.

[2]) Malay Sketches by F. A. Swettenham, London 1895.

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[773] Another myth of creation reads as follows: "In the beginning, the world was all water, and there were no living [774] creatures. Then the Creator made an earthenware pot that floated on the water, and this was land that floated on the sea. Like a human body that is made of flesh and bones the earth is made of rock and soil.

In the lowlands the Creator planted the bamboo, the sisin-nambong. After that, he made the Lang-chuk Lang-dal, that are now known as the Himalaya mountains, and he created the pa-song pumun bamboo which grows at the foot of these hills. And then he created Pudung-thing and Nazong-gnyu who were the first male and female, and it is from these two that human beings were spread over the entire world. Then there was neither birth nor death; but this was created later to suit the world.

The seeds of all the crops were given by Pudung-thing and Nazong-gnyu to all their children who cultivated the [775] land and lived on the produce."[28] If the elements are connected with creation it is surely due to Tibetan and Hindu influence. [776] In the lowest region is the wind, and above it are fire, water and earth.[29] However, only two elements are mentioned: Ti-gung-thik, the first man who is supposed to be identical with fire, and Ni-gung-ngal, the first woman, who is identical with water.[30]

Apart from the earth the heavens were also decked out with the sun, moon, stars and clouds created by Rum.[31] It is also narrated that in the beginning there were two suns in the sky. One of these shone by day and the other by night. As it never grew dark, the earth suffered from incessant heat, and so one of the suns was shot down. Seven or more moons were supposed to have existed.[32] These, too, are mythological [777] themes which the Lepchas have in common with the Indo-Chinese peoples. Myths about creation are very numerous among these tribes.[33]

28. C. B. Stocks, Folklore and Customs of the Lepchas of Sikkim, Journal and Proceedings, Asiatic Society of Bengal, N. S. Vol. XXI, 125/127. N. 4. p. 268.
29. C. B. Stocks, op. cit., p. 345.
30. Story as told by a Bong thing from Git biyong.
31. cfr. op. cit. p. 439.
32. op. cit. p. 336, Note 1, p. 363 sq.
33. cfr. G. Gorer, Himalayan Village, An account of the Lepchas of Sikkim, London 1938, p. 223 sq.; cfr. The Song of Creation in Waddell, Among the Himalayas, London, 1900, p. 294 sq.

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793 wrongly includes all similar phenomena. The Mun and the
789 Bong-thing bear the closest resemblance to the Barwas of the
171 Bhils, the Pariar or Parihar of the Korkus (Central India), the Mantravadis of the Parayans and Pulayans (South India), and the Mantravadis of many other primitive tribes of India. We find here a very old class of magicians who have maintained their primitive tradition, and have well established rites and rules.

793 Next in importance to the Mun and the Bong-thing,
[776] the male Pau and the female Andshemu or Nandshemu are to be found among the Lepchas. Both these are said to be Tibetan spirits and are not empowered to perform the great sacrifices. They need the equipment of the Tibetan Shaman :
[778] —thunderbolts, skull-drums, etc. Tibetan influence is clearly evinced in all details. It may be noted that a Mun can also be an Andshemu, *e.g.* Han-bu-ni whom we have mentioned on more than one occasion. When she came forth as an
[781] Andshemu she spoke Tibetan in the trance and employed the Tibetan articles in the performance of the ceremonies. A Bong-thing can at the same time be a Pau, and he uses the Tibetan articles when he presents himself as a Pau. Some investigators have failed to observe this difference, and have in consequence erroneously declared the Mun and the Bong-thing to be identical with the Tibetan Bon-po. Gorer failed to perceive this important distinction, and hence there occur in his work, statements which are contradictory to the observations we have made. He states, for example, that the Mun are only female. We have taken great pains to verify that there are both male and female Mun. He calls the Bong-thing "Padem," who was supposed to represent a Tibetan spirit.
● [777] This, however, indicates the extent to which Tibetan influence has extended in the area, particularly as the district in which Gorer carried out his research lay further north, to the Tibetan frontier. Gorer considers the Bong-thing to be weaker than the Mun, which again is not true in the districts in which we carried out our research. He draws a distinction between two kinds of Mun ; the good Tang-li Mun, the white magician, and the bad Mun-mook Mun, the black magician. Gorer
[754] however admits that whether one belongs to one type or to the other, depends upon the teacher from whom the instruction

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rice as a food. The fact that the offering of sacrifices to the deities concerned with farming was preponderantly a woman's concern, leads us to conclude that farming was originally the work of the women. In the olden days the fields were burnt out in order to prepare them for the plantation. Part of the forest was burnt, cleaned up, and the cultivation of grain would be carried on for one or two years, after which the tribesmen would move away to another area. This is known as shifting cultivation. Today, the burning of fields is controlled by government, lest too much damage be done to the forests. The permanent field system is the common practice today. (Fig. 25-27)

The Rong originally dug up their fields with the use of the hoe, and they did not use the plough. They have taken over the plough only recently from the Indians and the Nepalese. The Lepcha's knowledge of farming was very elementary and they could by no means compete with the Indian and Nepalese farmers. There was a reason behind this. The Lepchas were not totally dependent for their existence on farming, for the collection of roots and plants, and hunting, offered them rich sources of nourishment. A little cattle-breeding goes hand in hand with farming. They keep a few cattle and goats ; sheep are kept very seldom, and at the most one or two pigs. The cattle are the mountain Zebu. The humps of these animals are feebly developed, but for the rest they are strong animals. The Zebu are generally of a black colour. The goats are of a poor variety and have no special breed. The pig, which is different in shape from the black Chinese pig, has as its forbear the black Himalayan boar. The stomach of the pig does not hang down low ; it has small erect ears, a strong mane of bristles, and a long and pointed head. A Lepcha who is well off keeps about eight to ten cattle, and among these are two pairs of oxen for cultivation. The other animals are milk cows and calves. The milk provided by these animals is used mainly for tea ; but occasionally butter is made from it. The number of goats reared is also not very large—ranging from ten to fifteen among the richer folk. The cattle and goats are driven to the grassy slopes for grazing throughout the day and in the evening they return to their stalls. (Fig. 28)

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places made of five stones. The third stone in the middle is common to both and is long enough to support a kettle on each of its outer extremities. Since the stones are placed with a view to holding larger kettles little iron tripods with rings are placed between the stones so as to permit the use of little kettles. Wood is used for fuel. About 1 and ½ meter above the fire a bamboo framework shelf is suspended for holding the kitchen utensils, fuel and other articles. The fireplace stretches across the entire width of the house, as it is the chief work-room, dining-room and, at night, the dormitory. In addition to this there are other little rooms shut off by wooden partitions. Some of these have a roof made of bamboo slats. All types of belongings are stored up over this ceiling which can be approached by the help of a tree trunk notched at intervals to serve as stairs. Occasionally one finds an additional partition which serves as an altar on which sacrifices are offered. This is, very likely, a borrowing from Buddhism.

The pig sties are sometimes located under the house, sometimes at the side. Near the house are situated the stables for cattle and goats and the poultry cages, together with other store houses. The entire settlement in some cases is completely enclosed with a bamboo fence.

Individual farmhouses are as a rule all by themselves. But there are also settlements which comprise of two, three or four houses. This kind of dwelling, a kind of building on piles, is characteristic of the Rong, but has its parallels in South-East Asia and South China.

The ancient costume of the Rong consists of two coarse striped widths of cloth which are held in place over the shoulders by means of a clasp, and about the loins with the aid of a cloth girdle. It reaches up to the knees. Both men and women wear trousers which come below the knees. Sometimes the men wear a short shirt, while the women wear a bodice. This was the ancient costume and the material for this was woven by the Lepchas themselves. Today the practice of weaving has almost died out. The Lepchas purchase ready-made materials. In place of the old style the women have taken over the Tibetan style in an ever increasing degree; the long dress without sleeves (the Tibetan

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dress is with sleeves) held with a girdle, and a jacket over it. The head gear consists of a cloth worn in the manner of the Nepalese women. The old head-dress for the men was a thimble-shaped hat woven from bamboo; see book-cover. (Fig. 33-36).

The Rong folk wear rings, bracelets, and necklaces as ornaments. But one will never come across a case of a Rong wearing any ornamentation to the nose, the feet and the toes. The most common implement used by the women is the sickle. A bent sickle hook-shaped at the upper end is called bahur in the Lepcha tongue, and kurpa in Nepalese. It is used for cutting wood and the branches of trees. Another kind of sickle, in the shape of a half moon, is called angsu (sikāl in Nepalese) and is used to mow grass and weeds. The third type has a toothed edge, and is used as a kind of saw. It is called angsu in Lepcha and ancher in Nepalese. A girl is given her sickle at the age of seven or eight, and the boy his knife, so that from a very early age they may be able to practise the use of the most universal of instruments. Usually it is carried in the belt at the back. (Fig. 37-44)

The most important of the implements used for farming is the wide shovel-like hoe, and it is used for loosening the earth and clearing it of weeds. There are in addition two or three pronged hoes used for loosening the earth and relieving it of weeds.

The plough has been taken over from the Nepalese. It consists of a horn shaped piece of wood, which is tipped by the iron ploughshare. The drawing beam goes up from the centre and above is the plough handle with a handle to steer with. The beam is fixed to the yoke which is drawn by two oxen.

The economy of the Rong corresponds entirely with that of the other mountain peoples of South-East Asia and South China, *e.g.* the Miau. They were originally hunters who have taken over to farming. They have certainly not learnt the old agricultural economy from other peoples, but they absorbed into themselves the people who practised the arts of farming. Domestic animals are reared mainly for the purpose of sacrifice and not for any economic gain, and they are of the greatest importance. The combination of hunting with